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Ministry of Forests

GOVERNMENT COMMITS TO FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ON CODE

VICTORIA – The British Columbia government will sit down with stakeholders, including First Nations, to revise the proposed results-based forest practices code and work on other recommendations contained in George Hoberg's report on the code consultation, Forests Minister Michael de Jong announced today.

"This is the next step in fulfilling our New Era commitment to streamline the Forest Practices Code," de Jong said. "Thanks to the MLA committee chaired by Rod Visser and to Dr. Hoberg's stakeholder process, we heard constructive feedback from a variety of groups and individuals."

The reports by Visser, the MLA for North Island, and Hoberg, head of the department of forest resources management at the University of British Columbia, were released today. Hoberg's report contains 24 recommendations, among them that government work with industry to analyse the cost implications of the new code and include site-level plans in the new framework. A key recommendation was that government work with stakeholders and First Nations to revise the proposed results-based code.

"Dr. Hoberg's report provides useful recommendations we need to address," de Jong said. "Stakeholders and First Nations have a crucial role in that process.

"Our goal is to bring in a new code that will cut the regulatory burden and costs associated with an overly prescriptive legislative maze while maintaining the province's high environmental standards," de Jong added. "In the long run, that is the best way to encourage growth, investment and jobs in British Columbia's forest industry while protecting the environmental integrity of our forest lands."

The government intends to introduce legislation this fall, with implementation of the new results-based code in April 2003.

The consultation process Hoberg directed ran from May 1 to June 30, 2002. Hoberg met with 58 stakeholder groups and individuals, and received 133 written submissions. The MLA committee heard more than 250 presentations during public meetings in 13 locations, while the results-based code Web site attracted more than 88,000 hits.

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"The quality and number of presentations from individuals, groups and communities around the province show the importance our forests have for British Columbians," Visser said. "I was deeply impressed."

Hoberg also reported that the consultation process was both open and transparent.

The reports are available at www.resultsbasedcode.ca on the Internet.

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